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Sophocles' Wedding Cakes (*Eris* fr. 199)

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Abstract

This paper uncovers the connotations of the cakes (ἰτρία) mentioned in Sophocles fr. 199 and argues that they provide hitherto overlooked evidence to reinforce the thesis that *Eris* was a satyr play set at the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis. The cakes are shown to be compatible with a wedding banquet setting, which is strongly indicative of satyr drama. Finally, it is suggested that *Eris* herself may have spoken the line.

Keywords

Sophocles – *Eris* – satyr play - weddings - cakes

1. The Setting of *Eris*

Among the many titbits of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* is the following passage on *itria*, which occurs within a long expounding of different types of cake:

ἰτρίον. πεμμάτιον λεπτόν διὰ σησάμου καὶ μέλιτος γινόμενον. μνημονεύει αὐτοῦ Ἀνακρέων οὕτως· ἡρίστησα μὲν ἰτρίου λεπτοῦ μικρόν, ἀποκλάς, οἶνου δ' ἐξέπιον κάδον. Ἀριστοφάνης Ἀχαρνεῦσιν· πλακοῦντες, σησαμοῦντες, ἰτρία. Σοφοκλῆς Ἐριδι· ἐγὼ δὲ πεινώσ' αὖ (Musurus: πεινωσαγαυ cod.) πρὸς ἰτρία βλέπω. (Ath. 14.646d)

Itrion. A delicate cake made of sesame and honey. Anacreon mentions it like this (*PMG* 373.1-2): 'And I breakfasted on a bit of crisp *itrion*, breaking it off, and drank a jar of wine.' Aristophanes in the *Acharnians* (1092): 'Flat cakes, sesame-cakes, *itria*'. Sophocles in the *Eris* (fr. 199): 'But I, being hungry, gaze again towards the *itria*.'¹

The final quotation comes from Sophocles' *Eris* ('Strife'), a play for which we possess just three short fragments (fr. 199-201),² and for whose plot and generic status we have no explicit evidence. By far the best-known and most consequential action of the goddess *Eris* in myth is her intervention at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, which ultimately leads to the Trojan War. This episode was related in the *Cypria*, according to the summary of Proclus:

παραγενομένη δὲ Ἐρις εὐωχουμένων τῶν θεῶν ἐν τοῖς Πηλέως γάμοις νείκος περὶ κάλλους ἀνίστησιν Ἀθηνᾶι, Ἥρῃ καὶ Ἀφροδίτῃ· αἱ πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον ἐν Ἰδῇ κατὰ Διὸς προσταγὴν ὑφ' Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς τὴν κρίσιν ἄγονται. (*Cypria* Arg. 4-7 PEG = Arg. 7-10 EGF = Arg. 1 West)

¹ Tragic and comic fragments are numbered according to *TrGF* and *PCG* respectively. The abbreviation KPS refers to Krumeich, Pechstein and Seidensticker 1999. All translations are my own.

² Luppe 1996 unconvincingly proposed a fourth citation of the play at Phld. *Piet.* N 433 IX.

As the gods are enjoying a lavish banquet at the wedding of Peleus, Eris arrives and stirs up an argument over beauty between Athena, Hera and Aphrodite. On Zeus' command, Hermes leads them to Alexander on Mount Ida for judgement.

The resolution of the goddesses' quarrel through adjudication by Paris was the subject of Sophocles' satyric *Crisis* ('The Judgement'; fr. 360-361). It has often been conjectured that *Eris* treated the first part of this mythical episode, the disruption of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.³ A second widespread conclusion is that *Eris* was satyric, since the tone and content of fr. 199 have struck scholars as more appropriate for satyr play than tragedy.⁴ Only a few alternatives to these two stances have been proposed, and this paper will not add to them.⁵ It rather aims to bolster the case for the probable content, setting and genre of *Eris* by starting from some overlooked evidence: the *itria*.

As explained by Athenaeus, these cakes were made of honey and sesame seeds, rather like biscuits or 'a crisp wafer-bread'.⁶ There were many different types of sesame cake (e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 1092 lists both *σησαμοῦντες* and *ἴτρια*), but the characteristic feature of *itria* seems to have been crispness, as suggested by Anacreon's description of his breakfast as *λεπτός* and able to be snapped (*ἀποκλάς*) into pieces, and by Herod. 3.44 *ἀλλ' ὁ κέραμος πᾶς ὥσπερ ἴτρια θλῆται* ('but all the tiling is smashed up like *itria*'), referring to a damaged roof. In the various definitions of *ἴτρια* offered by the lexicographers, the recurring adjectives used are *λεπτός* (thin, light) and *καπυρώδης* (dried-out, brittle).⁷ The frangible nature of *itria* was the source of a proverbial saying, preserved at Zen. 5.73 *πάντα χναύματα· λέγουσι τὰ ἀποθραύσματα τῶν ἰτριῶν καὶ πλακούντων. τὸ γοῦν πᾶν χναύμα σημαίνει*

³ Bergk 1833, 10-11; Pearson 1917, 1.139-140; Guggisberg 1947, 106; Jouan 1966, 99; Hourmouziades 1974, 242; Steffen 1979, 37; Gantz 1993, 230; Lloyd-Jones 1996, 76-77; Seidensticker 2012, 219.

⁴ Brunck 1786, 2.3.17 and Böckh 1808, 127 both assumed that the play was satyric (albeit calling it *Iris*, based on reading Ἰριδι in Athenaeus). Some scholars have identified *Eris* with the satyric *Crisis*: see n. 33. *Eris* is considered probably or certainly satyric by e.g. Pearson 1917, 1.139; Steffen 1935, xvii, 50-51; Guggisberg 1947, 106; Jouan 1966, 99; Radt 1977 (1999²), 188; Gantz 1993, 230; Heynen and Krumeich, KPS 391; Jouanna 2007, 626; Seidensticker 2012, 212, 219; O'Sullivan and Collard 2013, 505.

⁵ Welcker 1826, 313 proposed that the play was about an instance of *ἔρις* rather than *Eris* herself, and that it dramatized the rivalry of Zeus and Poseidon over Themis. Themis is sometimes represented as a consort of Zeus (Hes. *Th.* 901; Pi. fr. 30 S-M) but there is no evidence for a tradition of the brothers fighting over her. Welcker's suggestion appears to be based on a misinterpretation of Pl. *R.* 379e-380a *θεῶν ἔριν τε καὶ κρίσιν διὰ Θέμιτός τε καὶ Διός* ('the strife and judgement of the gods, brought about by Themis and Zeus') and/or a confusion of Themis and Thetis due their similar names and/or Themis' role in resolving the rivalry of Zeus and Poseidon over Thetis (Pi. *I.* 8.27-48). Steffen 1935, xvii thought that *Eris* dramatized the quarrel over Thetis, but mangled the evidence by citing the same line from the *Republic* with *Θέτιδός* in place of *Θέμιτός* (he later changed his mind: Steffen 1979, 37 states that the play was about *Eris*' actions at the wedding). Heynen and Krumeich, KPS 390-391 summarise previous proposals without coming down in favour of any. O'Sullivan and Collard 2013, 505 conflate two different weddings when they write that *Eris* might have been about "the quarrel between the Lapiths and the Centaurs at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis." As regards the genre of *Eris*, the only sustained argument against satyric status is Sutton 1974, 133, for which see section 2 (I discount the entertaining but far-fetched hypothesis of Walker 1919, 355-377 that the *Eris* fragments actually come from a Sophoclean *Eiresione* song).

⁶ Olson 2002, 336.

⁷ E.g. Moer. 115 Hansen, Hsch. 11095 Latte, Phot. 1267 Theodoridis, *Synagoge* 1147 Cunningham, *Sud.* 1745 Adler, *EM* 479.39-40 Gaisford. See also the note of Headlam and Knox 1922, 140 on Herod. 3.44.

οἶον πᾶν πρᾶγμα (“All the scraps”: referring to the pieces broken off from *itria* and flat cakes. For indeed ‘every scrap’ means the same as ‘the whole matter’); cf. also Gal. *Hippocratic Glossary* 19.100 Kühn ὅθεν καὶ τὸ ἱτρίον ἐρείκιον ὀνομάζεται καὶ αὐτὸ, διότι εὐθραυστον (‘for this reason, the *itrion* too is also called an *ereikion* [which he derives from ἐρείκειν, ‘to break’], because it breaks very easily’).⁸

There is evidence that sesame cakes—although not *itria* specifically—played a role in the classical Athenian marriage celebration. They appear in the preparations for the marriage of Trygaeus and Opora at Ar. *Pax* 869 ὁ πλακοῦς πέπεπται, σησαμῇ ξυμπλάττεται (‘the cake is baked, the sesame cake is being moulded’). In Menander’s *Samia*, we find references to sesame/sesame cakes in the demand for wedding activities at 74-75 θύειν, στεφανοῦσθαι, σησαμῇ | κόπτειν (‘sacrifice, put on a garland, chop the sesame cake’), Moschion imagining his actions as bridegroom at 124-125 περιπατῶν | τὴν σησαμῇν διένεμον (‘I went round distributing the sesame cake’), and the list of wedding items at 190 στεφάνους, ἱερεῖον, σήσαμα (‘garlands, an animal sacrifice, sesame’). At Ar. *An.* 159-161, the Hoopoe states that the birds feed on τὰ λευκὰ σήσαμα | καὶ μύρτα καὶ μήκωνα καὶ σισύμβρια (‘white sesame, myrtle, poppy and bergamot mint’), to which Euelpides responds that they are living the νυμφίων βίον (‘bridegrooms’ lifestyle’).⁹

These cakes are also mentioned at Stesich. fr. 3 Davies-Finglass σασαμίδας χόνδρον τε καὶ ἐγκρίδας ἄλλα τε πέμματα καὶ μέλι χλωρόν (‘sesame cakes, wheat pudding and fried honey cakes, and other pastries and pale honey’). On the basis of the cakes’ nuptial connotations and the statement of Athenaeus (4.172d-e) that the lines come from *The Games* [for Pelias] and describe ‘gifts for the virgin girl’ (τῇ παρθένῳ δῶρα), Davies and Finglass propose that the speaker is a warrior talking of his desire to wed Atalanta, in which case he would be describing the delicacies to be eaten at the wedding.¹⁰ Similarly, Arnott suggested that the reason the chef’s shopping list at Alex. *The Cauldron* fr. 132 begins with sesame (3 σήσαμα) is because he is preparing a wedding banquet; this forms part of a wider argument that the play was the Greek model for Plautus’ *Aulularia* (‘The Little Pot’), which features the preparations for a wedding.¹¹ These conjectures are plausible—in both cases there are further reasons for suspecting a nuptial context—but not certain: the consumption of sesame cakes was not restricted to weddings, as we see from Amphis

⁸ With the sources cited in this paragraph, note the *caveat* that in medical texts and later authors, *itria* may not refer specifically to the sesame and honey version, since the word comes to be used as a more general term for a cake or biscuit (and possibly also of a pastry or pasta-like product: see Canfora 2001, 1673, 1679; Dalby 2003, 251). Nonetheless, it appears that the name retained its association with a brittle texture, even as the ingredients varied.

⁹ See Dunbar 1995, 184-185 on the possible nuptial associations of these plants. According to *Sud.* σ 339 Adler, which is a gloss on these lines, the bridegroom was crowned with sesame, poppy and bergamot mint. This seems to be the source for the claim of Oakley and Sinos 1993, 16 that the groom’s garland included sesame and mint. However, the information in the *Suda* may have been inferred from Aristophanes; cf. Dunbar 1995, 185.

¹⁰ Davies and Finglass 2014, 227.

¹¹ Arnott 1996, 362-363, 385, 863-864; cf. Stama 2016, 261. We may find a similar instance at Anaxandr. *Protesilaus* fr. 42, in which a speaker first describes the lavish Thracian wedding of Iphicrates and then narrates an extensive list of foods, including sesame (60 σήσαμα), that his master will serve at an even more sumptuous banquet. It is unclear whether the latter event is itself a wedding feast; but in any case, the comparison with Iphicrates’ wedding and the nuptial association of sesame cakes make the inclusion of σήσαμα “perhaps particularly appropriate here” (Millis 2015, 230).

Gynecomania fr. 9, naming *σησαμαί* (3) and other sympotic treats as the ‘twelve gods’ that contribute to a refined life, and Ephipp. *Cydon* fr. 13, a list of after-dinner snacks including *σησαμίδες* (3). A general association of these cakes with luxury is implied by Eup. *Flatterers* fr. 176, mocking a man who ‘smells of the Graces, shimmies when he walks, shits sesame cakes (3 *σησαμίδας δὲ χέζει*) and coughs up apples’.

The *σησαμή/σησαμής* referred to in these texts was a cake made of roasted sesame seeds, honey and olive oil, and was eaten by both newlyweds and guests as part of the wedding celebration.¹² Phot. σ 187 Theodoridis states that ‘in the olden days’ the bridegroom would go round distributing the sesame cake to friends, but that ‘now’ it is given to guests at the feast hosted at home. It was considered propitious and suitable for the occasion since the seeds represented fertility, according to Schol. Ar. *Pax* 869 *πλακοὺς γαμικὸς ἀπὸ σησάμων πεποιημένος, διὰ τὸ πολὺγονον, ὥς φησι Μένανδρος* (‘a wedding cake made from sesame seeds, for reasons of fertility, according to Menander’) and Phot. σ 187 Theodoridis *ἐν δὲ τοῖς γάμοις ἐδίδοσαν σησάμην ἐπεὶ πολυγονώτατον σήσαμον* (‘at weddings they would distribute the sesame-cake, because the sesame plant is very prolific’). Sesame was therefore seen as an appropriate wedding food, and the *σησαμή/σησαμής* was served at wedding celebrations because of its symbolism.

From this we might reasonably deduce that although the sesame-based *itrion* is nowhere explicitly said to be a wedding cake, it was nonetheless a cake appropriate to serve at a wedding. Indeed, we probably find it in this exact context in Archippus:

ἄπερ Ἀρχιππος ἐν Ἡρακλεῖ Γαμοῦντι ἐπιφορήματα καλεῖ διὰ τούτων. ἰτρίοις ἐπιφορήμασί τ’ ἄλλοις γέμουςα. (Archipp. fr. 11 = Ath. 14.640e-f)

Archippus in *Heracles Marrying* refers to them [delicacies] as *epiphorêmata* in this passage: ‘loaded with *itria* and other *epiphorêmata*.’

Archippus describes something (almost certainly a table, *τράπεζα*) full of *epiphorêmata*, i.e. the additional dishes served with wine after the main courses had been cleared away. The line as cited is unmetrical and hence not a verbatim quotation, but given the subject matter of the play it is reasonable to assume that the mention of *itria* will have been in relation to a symposium as part of Heracles’ wedding celebrations.¹³ Archippus seems to have depicted the gods as adhering to contemporary sympotic practice, as was probably the case also in *Eris*. This seems to provide a good parallel for the presence of *itria* at a wedding feast, and it is notable that here the *itria* are singled out from the other delicacies, perhaps due to their particular suitability for a wedding banquet.

¹² For the ingredients, see Athen. 14.646f. See further Steier s.v. ‘Sesamon’, *RE* II.4 (1923), 1849-1853 (esp. 1851-1852); Erdmann 1934, 260; Oakley and Sinos 1993, 23; Olson 1998, 237 and 2016, 106-107; Vérilhac and Vial 1998, 348-349; Papachrysostomou 2016, 72. The tradition continues to the present day in some regions of Greece in the form of the *παστέλι*, a popular candy bar made of sesame seeds and honey that is offered to wedding guests. Oakley and Sinos claim that these cakes are shown on a *lekanis* of c. 360-350 B.C. by the Eleusinian Painter (St Petersburg St. 1791, *ARV*² 1476-7.3), which depicts, among other wedding preparations, two seated women apparently moulding food items on a small table, with one holding a finished product in her left hand. However, Vérilhac and Vial 1998, 349-352 note that the woman standing to their left seems to be kneading dough in a basin, and argue that the items are in fact bread rolls.

¹³ See e.g. Miccolis 2016, 72.

Three further examples feature *itria* as part of lavish dinners. Solon includes them in a description of an extravagant symposium:

πίνουσι· καὶ τρώγουσιν οἱ μὲν ἴτρια
οἱ δ' ἄρτον αὐτῶν, οἱ δὲ συμμεμιγμένους
γούρους φακοῖσι· κείθι δ' οὔτε πεμμάτων
ἄπεστιν οὐδ' ἔν, ἄσθ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισι γῇ
φέρει μέλαινα, πάντα δ' ἀφθόνως πάρα. (Sol. fr. 38 IEG²)

They are drinking; and some are nibbling on *itria*, and some on their bread, and some on *gouroi* [a type of cake] mixed with lentils. And in that place not one type of pastry was missing, of all those that the dark earth bears for humankind, but every kind was plentifully available.

Solon refers to a banquet at some unspecified distance (3 κείθι) but the setting and identity of the participants remains unclear, with a wide variety of options having been proposed; it is also unclear whether the tone is laudatory or critical.¹⁴ The emphatic, hyperbolic presence of *every* kind of cake, and the imagery of the earth seemingly producing them ready-made, bypassing the process of confection, hints at an otherworldly state of abundance. The phrasing is perhaps intended to recall the earth's spontaneous production of cooked food during the Age of Cronus, which was a popular theme in Old Comedy: see e.g. Telecl. *Amphictyons* fr. 1, where various foods, including cake, are described as voluntarily presenting themselves (and even competing with one another) to be eaten.¹⁵

In the *Acharnians*, the *itria* appear in a catalogue of items for a dinner party, a common trope of Old Comedy that conveys the event's extravagance:

τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντ' ἐστὶν παρεσκευασμένα,
κλῖναι τράπεζαι προσκεφάλαια στρώματα
στέφανοι μύρον τραγήμαθ', αἱ πόρνοι πάρα,
ἄμυλοι πλακοῦντες σησαμοῦντες ἴτρια
ὀρχηστρίδες, τὰ φίλταθ' Ἀρμοδίου, καλαί. (Ar. *Ach.* 1089-1093)

Everything else is ready: the couches, tables, cushions, bedclothes; the garlands, perfume, nibbles; the prostitutes are there; fine-meal cakes, flat cakes, sesame cakes, *itria*, and dancing-girls—Harmodius' favourites—gorgeous ones!

We find a similar scene in Ephippus' *Ephebes*:

χόνδρος μετὰ ταῦτ' εἰσῆλθε, μύρον Αἰγύπτιον,

¹⁴ See Noussia-Fantuzzi 2010, 497-501.

¹⁵ For discussion of this fragment, see Pellegrino 2000, 71-84; Bagordo 2013, 51-74. On the utopian theme of 'ready-cooked' food in Old Comedy, see Wilkins 2000, 110-121 (cf. Papachrysostomou 2016, 181-183 on a probable unique occurrence of this theme in Middle Comedy at Amphis, *Uranus* fr. 28); on the role of food in comic utopias more generally, see Pellegrino 2000; Farioli 2001, 197-208.

Φοινικικοῦ βίκος τις ὑπανεώιγνυτο,
 ἴτρια, τραγήμαθ' ἦκε, πυραμοῦς, ἄμης,
 ὠίων ἐκατόμβη· πάντα ταῦτ' ἐχναύομεν.
 ἐμασώμεθ' οὕτως ἀνδρικῶς ὅς' εἶχομεν·
 καὶ γὰρ παραμασύντας τινὰς παραβόσκομεν (Ephipp. fr. 8)

5

And after that, the wheat pudding entered, and Egyptian perfume; someone opened up a jar of Phoenician wine, and *itria* and snacks arrived, wheat-and-honey cake, milk cake, a huge amount of eggs. We were nibbling on all of these. So we were chomping down vigorously on everything that we had—for actually, we were also feeding some fellow-chewers.

In both comic texts, the *itria* are listed alongside further varieties of cake and other dainties in order to create a sense of gastronomic abundance.¹⁶ In Ephippus, the scale of the meal is emphasised by the cataloguing of items, the fact that the food ‘entered’ (1 εἰσῆλθε, 3 ἦκε) as if of its own accord (perhaps recalling utopian themes, as we saw in Solon), the exaggerated quantity of eggs (4 ἐκατόμβη, lit. ‘a hecatomb’), and the comic turn from nibbling (4 ἐχναύομεν) to energetic gobbling (5 ἐμασώμεθ’) as the diners attempt to out-eat their fellow-banqueters.¹⁷ In all three authors we find *itria* in passages that emphasise and exaggerate a high life of extravagance and plenty.

The ancient Greek banquet was divided into two stages: the main dinner (δεῖπνον) was eaten first, followed by the symposium proper, at which wine was consumed accompanied by further dishes. Various terms are applied to these after-dinner snacks, including *epiphorēmata* (‘things brought in’) and *tragēmata* (‘nibbles’), and they usually consisted of foods such as cakes, fresh and dried fruits, eggs, seeds and nuts.¹⁸ In all four texts cited above, it is evident that the *itria*, like other ancient varieties of cake, belonged to this latter stage of the banquet, sometimes referred to as the ‘second tables’ (δεύτεραι τράπεζαι). Archipp. fr. 11 refers to ‘*itria* and other *epiphorēmata*’; at both Ar. *Ach.* 1091 and Ephipp. fr. 8.3 the *itria* are served alongside *tragēmata*; and in the Solon passage, πίνουσι (fr. 38.1) makes it clear that the *itria* are being eaten at the sympotic stage of proceedings. We also find *itria* included in a list of *tragēmata* in Clearchus’ *On Riddles* (fr. 87 Wehrli). We would certainly expect to find this second, sympotic stage taking place at a lavish wedding celebration: cf. Alex. *Homoia* fr. 168, which states that it is custom for the bridegroom and his groomsmen to provide *tragēmata* when they go to ‘fetch the bride’, i.e. to attend the wedding banquet at her father’s house.¹⁹

So far, we have examined instances of *itria* at banquets. Of course, they could also be consumed outside of a sympotic context: in the fragment of Anacreon (*PMG* 373.1-2) cited by Athenaeus, the *itrion* seems to be a standard morning meal, and at Diph. *Hecate* fr. 27 (= adesp. fr. 585 K) ναστοὺς τροφαλίδας ἀμφιφῶντας ἴτρια (‘stuffed cakes, fresh cheeses, *amphiphôn* cakes [cakes dedicated to Artemis], *itria*’) they probably appear as part of a sacrificial offering. Nonetheless, the

¹⁶ On cakes as luxurious foods in comedy, see Wilkins 2000, 304-311.

¹⁷ See Olson 2007, 302-303.

¹⁸ On *epiphorēmata*, *tragēmata*, and ‘second tables’, see the passages quoted at Ath. 14.640a-643d, with e.g. Arnott 1996, 494; Olson 1998, 224; Wilkins 2000, 231, 308; Miccolis 2016, 72-75.

¹⁹ See Arnott 1996, 495.

evidence clearly shows that the *itrion* was particularly at home in descriptions of rich feasting, and more specifically at the ‘second tables’ stage of the meal. In addition, although the *itrion* was not a ‘wedding cake’ as such, I have suggested that it was a cake that could well have been served at a wedding, not just as a standard item of *epiphorêmata/tragêmata*, but also because its ingredients, like those of the *σησαμῆ/σησαμῖς*, made it particularly suitable for the occasion (as we probably find at Archipp. fr. 11). The mention of *itria* in fr. 199 therefore makes it extremely likely that *Eris* was set at a banquet, and when this is coupled with the reasonable expectation that a play called *Eris* would dramatize Eris’ best-known appearance—which happens to be at a wedding feast—we arrive at the virtually certain conclusion that the play was set at the wedding dinner of Peleus and Thetis. This paper will now demonstrate that the implications of this nuptial setting render it practically indisputable that the play was satyric.

2. The Genre of *Eris*

The mention of food in itself is not a secure indicator of dramatic genre, and although expressions of hunger and descriptions of feasting are typical satyric (and of course comic) themes, for a tragic parallel to fr. 199 we can compare the description of a loaded table in Euripides’ *Cretan Women*:²⁰

τί γάρ ποθεῖ τράπεζα; τῷ δ’ οὐ βρίθεται;
 πλήρης μὲν ὄψων ποντίων, πάρεισι δὲ
 μόσχων τέρειναι σάρκες χηνεῖα τε δαῖς
 καὶ πεπτὰ καὶ κροτητὰ τῆς ξουθοπτέρου
 πελάνωι μελίσσης ἀφθόνως δεδευμένα (E. fr. 467)

For what else could the table need? With what is not heavy? It is full of cooked seafood, and the tender veal flesh is there, and a feast of goose, and baked cakes and cakes liberally soaked in the thick liquid of the nimble-winged bee

However, if my argument about the setting of *Eris* is correct, this greatly increases the likelihood that *Eris* was satyric, since the wedding feast as a dramatic setting was much more strongly associated with satyr play and comedy than tragedy.

We have good reason to assume that Sophocles’ *Wedding of Helen* (possibly the same play as *Rape of Helen*) was satyric, based on Aristid. *Or.* 3.665 (= 46.307.14) which refers to a Sophoclean play in which the satyrs become overwhelmed by lust at the sight of Helen. There is also a possible description of a wedding feast at adesp. fr. 656 (P.Oxy. 2804), a heavily damaged text that bears some markers of satyric diction and style, as well as (but on fairly tenuous grounds) Sophoclean authorship. In this fragment, we find mention of a ‘Spartan woman’ (5 Σ]παρτ[ι]ᾶτιν), something to do with marriage (6 γαμηλέ[ι]), and a description of luxurious items, including perfumes and a Sardinian carpet. Based on this evidence, Carden suggested that the passage described a wedding feast and should perhaps be assigned to *Wedding of Helen*.²¹ The poor state of the text and slender evidence for Sophoclean authorship means that we cannot come to any firm conclusions on this

²⁰ See Lämmle 2013, 391-399 on hunger as a satyric motif. On the context of the banquet in *Cretan Women*, see n. 24.

²¹ Carden 1974, 248; see further 244-250. Cf. Heynen and Krumeich, KPS 393; Griffith 2006, 63.

front, but even if it is not by Sophocles it could conceivably come from another, otherwise unknown, satyr play set at a wedding.

From Doric and Old Comedy we find three plays that revolved around the wedding feast of Heracles and Hebe: Epicharmus wrote a *Wedding of Hebe* (later revised as *The Muses*), and both Archippus and Nicochares composed a *Heracles Marrying*, probably influenced by Epicharmus. The fragments of Epicharmus (fr. 40-62) and Archippus (fr. 10-12) show that their plays featured descriptions of food, and in the *Wedding of Hebe* this included an extensive catalogue of the seafood to be consumed at the banquet. Alcaeus wrote a *Hieros Gamos*, although we do not know if this referred to an actual divine marriage or the ritual celebration of the union of Zeus and Hera. From Middle and New Comedy we find plays simply entitled *Wedding(s)* by Antiphanes, Sophilus, Philemon and Diphilus, whose plots and settings are unknown, and titles such as Araros' *Hymenaeus* and Euangelus' *The Unveiled Bride*; the latter contained a scene in which two characters discuss arrangements for the wedding feast (Euang. fr. 1). The titles of these plays suggest or indicate that their plots centred on wedding celebrations. More generally, of course, the theme of marriage was a staple of the genre, and numerous plays focused on the pursuit of marriage, described weddings and wedding feasts, and (particularly in New Comedy) concluded with betrothals and marriage preparations.

By contrast, tragedy frequently employs—and in particular, subverts—the language, imagery and rituals of the nuptial ceremony;²² its characters often reflect on marriage; weddings may be anticipated and/or of central importance to the plot (e.g. Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy, Euripides' *Aeolus*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Phaethon*; probably Sophocles' *Iphigenia*); and a good number of plays concluded with references to future weddings.²³ However, with only one possible and uncertain exception,²⁴ there is no evidence for a tragedy in which any dramatic action took place at the time of the wedding banquet itself. The evidence strongly indicates that while the theme of marriage was fully appropriate for tragedy, the wedding feast itself, as a dramatic context, was seen as essentially non-tragic.

²² There is extensive bibliography on this topic: a classic discussion is Seaford 1987. For the language of marriage in satyr drama, see Griffith 2006, 60-68, who notes Sophocles' predilection for erotic language, themes and scenes in his satyr plays, and that the genre features "frequent references to other contexts of luxury, leisure, and high-living in addition to the symposium, especially weddings and betrothal ceremonies" (60). Cf. Seidensticker 2012, 221 on "the significance of beautiful women and Eros, courtship and weddings" in Sophoclean satyr play.

²³ For marriages predicted or instructed by a god *ex machina* see E. *Andr.* 1243-1245, *Antiope* fr. 223.129-131 (*TrGF* line numbering), *El.* 1249, *Erechtheus* fr. 370.104, *Or.* [1638], 1653-1659; *Medea at Med.* 1385 hints at her future marriage with Aegeus. The plots of several fragmentary tragedies make it probable or possible that marriage was arranged, ordered or predicted at their conclusion: e.g. Aeschylus' *Egyptians*, *Danaids*; Sophocles' *Andromeda* (occasionally considered satyric, but *contra* see Carrara forthcoming), *Hermione*, *Oenomaus* (occasionally considered satyric: e.g. Griffith 2006, 66); Euripides' *Andromeda*, *Antigone*, *Cretan Women* (see n. 24), *Melanippe Captive*, *Oenomaus*, *Peleus*; and no doubt many more plays for whose plots we have insufficient evidence.

²⁴ E. *Cretan Women* fr. 467 (quoted above; cf. fr. 468-469). According to Schol. S. *Aj.* 1297a, the plot ended with Nauplius betrothing Aerope to Pleisthenes, but we do not know if the wedding actually occurred during the play or if it was just foretold. The evidence for the play's content and setting is exceptionally difficult to interpret: see Collard 2005, 52-57. It is possible that fr. 467 describes the wedding feast (so Jouan and Van Looy 2000, 294, 296), but others have suggested that it refers to the Thyestean feast, or "a feast on Crete celebrating Aerope's future" (Collard and Cropp 2008, 518).

The wedding setting, then, suits a satyr play; and the setting of this particular wedding suits the satyrs. The location of Peleus and Thetis' wedding feast is not specified when Hera recalls the occasion at *Il.* 24.62-63, but in most other literary sources—including the *Cypria*—it is held on Mount Pelion in Thessaly, sometimes specifically at the home of the centaur Chiron, a rustic setting into which a chorus of satyrs would fit easily and plausibly.²⁵ We might, for example, imagine the satyrs attending the banquet as companions of their master Dionysus.

The fragments, title, and characters of *Eris* also fit the satyric hypothesis. Most of the arguments in favour of *Eris*' satyric status have focused on fr. 199, but it is also evident how fr. 200 εὖωρος γάμου ('ripe for marriage') would suit a wedding scenario, while the colloquial language of fr. 201 μίαν μίαν ('one by one', according to its testimonium—perhaps referring to the three goddesses), used in place of the usual κατὰ μίαν, again supports the thesis that this was a satyr play. *Momus* and *Hybris*, the only other Sophoclean plays named after an abstract concept/personification, are both explicitly attested as satyric; and so is *Crisis*, which dramatized the closely related subject of the Judgement of Paris. Based on the mythical tradition, the cast of *Eris* must have included, as well as Eris herself, some or all of Zeus, Hera, Athena, Aphrodite and Hermes.²⁶ While gods are found on-stage in Sophoclean tragedy, their appearance is much more common in satyr drama, and seems to have been a recurring feature of Sophoclean satyr play in particular.²⁷ The accumulation of evidence therefore strongly suggests that *Eris* was satyric, and it does not take much effort to imagine the humorous and dramatic potential of a play in which the bibulous, greedy and sex-mad satyrs attended a divine banquet in the company of three beautiful goddesses.

The only real argument in favour of a tragic (or at least, against a satyric) *Eris* has been advanced by Sutton.²⁸ He states that the evidence for the play's satyric status is not as strong as commonly assumed, based on three points: i) the mention of cakes "finds a good equivalent" in E. *Erechtheus* fr. 350.2 σελήνας τάσδε πυρίμου χλόης ('these moon-cakes of young wheat'); ii) the characters of Lyssa ('Madness') in *Hercules Furens* and Thanatos ('Death') in *Alceste* show that "as a personified quality Eris would not be out of place in a tragedy"; and iii) *Eris* may have been a tragic "companion-play" to the satyric *Crisis*.

I will address each point in turn. i) The cakes in *Erechtheus* are not directly comparable to the *itria* of fr. 199, since these are special sacrificial cakes used as religious offerings; we find them in both tragedy (E. *Tr.* 1075 ζῆθεοι σελᾶναι, 'sacred moon-cakes') and satyr play (Achaë. *Iris* fr. 23 σελᾶναι). As discussed above, it is not the mention of cakes *per se* that is a good indication of genre, but rather the specific contexts in which they are found. ii) It is certainly true that, as a personified abstraction, Eris could have featured in tragedy—to the examples cited we can add

²⁵ On Mount Pelion/in Thessaly: *Cypria* F 3 PEG, EGF = F 4 West, Pi. P. 3.86-92, N. 5.22-23, E. *IA* 1036-1047, Luc. *DMar.* 7.1, Apollod. 3.13.5. Hosted by Chiron: Alc. fr. 42.5-10, implied at Pi. N. 3.56-57 and *I.* 8.41, X. *Cyn.* 1.8, Schol. Pi. P. 3.90 (3.160 Drachmann), P.Oxy. 3829.ii.12-14. By contrast, Catul. 64.31-37 sets the wedding at Peleus' palace in Pharsalus. For Mount Pelion as a satyric location, cf. Sophocles' *Lovers of Achilles*, which may have been set there at least in part (see O'Sullivan and Collard 2013, 306-307). On mountains and caves as typical satyric settings, see Voelke 2001, 37-42; Lämmle 2013, 201-203.

²⁶ Given the three-actor restriction and the likelihood that one role was reserved for Silenus, not all of these characters may have had speaking parts. From our (admittedly not extensive) evidence, it appears that the number of speaking roles in satyr play was generally lower than in tragedy: see Lämmle 2013, 55-56 n. 8.

²⁷ Seidensticker 1979, 241 (≈ KPS 26); 2012, 217-219.

²⁸ Sutton 1974, 133; see also 1980, 58.

Kratos and Bia in *Prometheus Bound*²⁹—but the point is rather that, as Sutton himself notes, there are no tragic parallels for *naming* a play after an abstract concept (and/or personification thereof); for this as a feature of satyr play, see Sophocles' *Momus* and *Hybris*, and Dionysius' *Limos*.³⁰ iii) Sutton's hypothesis is based on a misunderstanding of the suggestion of Pearson that *Eris* was a “companion-play” to *Crisis*, which he takes to indicate that Pearson believed *Eris* to be tragic.³¹ However, as Pearson's subsequent references to satyrs and satyr play in his discussion of *Eris* make clear, he thought both plays were satyric, and saw *Crisis* as a sequel to *Eris* only in a thematic sense.³²

In sum, Sutton does not provide any positive evidence for *Eris* being tragic but rather demonstrates that some of its elements can also be found in tragedy. Since the play's title, setting, characters and fragments are all indicative or suggestive of satyr play, we would need some compelling reason to consider it tragic instead, and none has been supplied. It seems overwhelmingly likely that the play was satyric.

3. *Eris and Crisis*

Having established a case for the content and genre of *Eris*, we are now in a position to briefly address the proposal, advanced by various scholars, that *Eris* and *Crisis* were the same play.³³ We know that *Crisis* was satyric (test. fr. 360) and that it dealt with the Judgement of Paris, which Sophocles seems to have depicted in an allegorical manner with Athena representing virtue and Aphrodite pleasure (fr. 361). The setting will have been Mount Ida. Since the *itria* have demonstrated that *Eris* almost certainly featured a sympotic banquet, we can dismiss the theory that both titles refer to a single play set wholly at the Judgement. The remaining possibility is that the play *Eris/Crisis* covered both the wedding and the Judgement, presenting them as consecutive episodes.

There are obstacles to accepting this hypothesis, although none is insurmountable. The play would necessitate a change of scene from Mount Pelion to Mount Ida. In tragedy, scene-changes are possible but rare; there seems to have been one, however, in Sophocles' satyric *Lovers of Achilles*. An *Eris/Crisis* would be an outlier from the pattern of all other Sophoclean (and

²⁹ The list of ‘special’ tragic masks at Poll. 4.141-142 (which he states may also be used in comedy) includes a significant number of personified abstractions. This implies that such characters were more common in tragedy than our extant plays suggest, with the *caveat* that Pollux probably refers to masks from Hellenistic rather than fifth-century productions: see Stafford 2000, 12-13; Kotlińska-Toma 2015, 260-262.

³⁰ Achaëus' *Momus* is also usually assumed to be satyric, by analogy with Sophocles' play of the same name.

³¹ Pearson 1917, 1.139.

³² Pearson 1917, 1.139: “... there is nothing to prove that it [the golden apple] could not have been mentioned in a satyr-play of Sophocles. It is obvious that the marriage of Peleus and Thetis was an occasion on which a chorus of satyrs might very well have been present, and the fragments, so far as they go, support the idea of a banquet.” Cf. his description at 2.77 of *Momus*, *Eris* and *Crisis* as a trilogy, but “not of course in the technical sense”.

³³ First suggested, so far as I can tell, by Schöll 1839, 235-239 n. 140, who thought that it featured Eris as present at the Judgement (but possibly that an earlier part of the play was set at the wedding; his argument is inconsistent). Others who accept the possible identification of the two plays have assumed that the title *Eris* refers to the ἔρις of the goddesses (sc. at the Judgement): see Ahrens 1844, 363; Hartung 1851, 162; Wagner 1852, 256-258, Mancini 1896, 23-24, Campo 1940, 37. Most recently, Lloyd-Jones 1996, 76-77 suggested both that the play dealt with Eris' actions at the wedding and that it was identical with *Crisis*.

Aeschylean) plays known to have had double titles, where at least one title always refers to a group role, presumably that played by the chorus.³⁴ Moreover, the episode of Peleus' wedding would furnish sufficient material for a satyr play, which, as far as we can tell, typically tended to be shorter than tragedies. The *Eris* would have offered a complete narrative arc, containing both a threat to the satyrs, i.e. the goddesses' quarrel, and its resolution, i.e. the decision to refer the matter to Paris. Similarly, the mythical events of *Crisis* are easily shaped into a self-contained episode, and it is difficult to see what the inclusion of Eris' actions at the banquet would add to a play whose notable feature seems to have been Paris' allegorical choice between pleasure and virtue. On balance, it is not impossible that *Eris* and *Crisis* were alternative titles for the same play, but the points listed above render this the less likely option.

4. The Speaker of fr. 199

Finally, can we say anything about the hungry speaker of fr. 199? The participle *πεινῶσ'* (accepting Musurus' emendation) shows that they are female, and so probably a goddess present at the wedding. Ahrens suggested that the line was *responsio Veneris, quae Minervae contemnit sapientiam* ('the reply of Aphrodite, disdainful of Athena's wisdom').³⁵ Mancini deemed the sentiment inappropriate for any of the three goddesses and emended *πεινῶσ'* to *πεινῶν*, attributing the line to the satyrs.³⁶ Hourmouziades also altered the text to *πεινῶν*, and suggested that the speaker was Silenus.³⁷ Although the evidence does not permit us to identify the speaker with absolute certainty, a more plausible candidate would be Eris herself.

Later accounts relate that Eris was omitted from, or deliberately not invited to, the feast (Hyg. *Fab.* 92, Luc. *DMar.* 7.1, *Symp.* 35, Lib. *Narr.* 27.1 (= *Pr.* 8.50.12), Colluth. 39-40) and in several cases her anger over this slight is said to be the reason for her fateful intervention at the banquet. In Hyginus, it is Zeus who excludes Eris; in the version of Colluthus, she is enraged after being snubbed by Chiron and Peleus. In the version preserved at P.Oxy. 3829.ii (late second century A.D.), a text that includes a brief narrative of the origins of the Trojan War, Zeus orders Hermes to deny Eris entrance and she throws the golden apple into the banquet out of pique (18 ὀργισθεῖσα). Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* does not indicate that in this epic Eris was barred or uninvited, or that her exclusion motivated her subsequent actions.³⁸ However, his phrase *παραγενομένη δὲ Ἐρις εὐωχουμένων τῶν θεῶν* does at least indicate that she arrived only after all the other gods had begun feasting. I therefore propose that the line was uttered by Eris herself: as the only god not already at the banquet, she is still hungry and looks longingly towards the spread that her fellow immortals have been enjoying.³⁹

³⁴ See Sommerstein 2002, 15. This pattern does not hold, however, for the titles of other playwrights.

³⁵ Ahrens 1844, 364; he thought that the play could be identical with *Crisis*, but does not explain how fr. 199 would fit into this scenario.

³⁶ Mancini 1896, 24; followed by Campo 1940, 37, who added the ludicrous proposal that one of the goddesses had brought the cakes as a bribe for Paris.

³⁷ Hourmouziades 1974, 242.

³⁸ In the *Cypria*, Zeus may have instructed Eris to disrupt the wedding in order to advance his plan for the Trojan War: see e.g. West 2013, 74, who also notes that it is common sense to exclude 'Strife' from a happy occasion.

³⁹ To the best of my knowledge, only Schöll 1839, 237 n. 140 has previously proposed Eris, also based on the fact that she was the sole uninvited guest.

The *itria* may offer a final clue in this regard. As we saw in section 1, the ancient sources make it clear that, when served at a banquet, *itria* were brought in only after the main courses had been cleared away, as part of the ‘second tables.’ This does not prove that the speaker was Eris, but it is certainly consistent with that conjecture: the words would perfectly suit a late-arriving guest who has missed the main courses but made it in time for dessert.

Comedy regularly depicted gods as harbouring appetites for human food, and so it is plausible that a divine figure could have been depicted thus in satyr drama.⁴⁰ If Eris did express the rather undignified sentiment of hunger, then we might posit that she was not classed among the ‘heroic’ characters of this satyr play but rather appeared in the ‘ogre’ role that was a typical feature of the genre.⁴¹ As the personification of strife itself, Eris could certainly be a genuinely threatening figure. At Hom. *Il.* 4.440-445 she is a monstrous sister of Ares who rages constantly and quickly swells to a huge size with her head touching the sky. In Hesiod’s *Theogony* she is *στρυγερή* (‘loathsome’, *Th.* 226) and both sibling and mother to many personified evils (*Th.* 223-232; cf. *Op.* 14-16). In art, Eris could be depicted with a grotesque appearance: Pausanias 5.19.2 records that the c. sixth century B.C. Chest of Cypselus featured “Ἐρις αἰσχίστη τὸ εἶδος ἐοικυῖα (‘Eris in the form of an extremely repulsive woman’).⁴² A common satyric plotline was one in which the satyrs overcame a monstrous, ogre-like figure, and so perhaps Eris took on this role in her eponymous play, even if the threat to the satyrs in this case was no more than her ruining their enjoyment of the banquet.

This paper has not aimed to challenge the *communis opinio* regarding *Eris*, but rather has offered some hitherto unnoticed evidence in its favour, demonstrating that in the study of fragmentary drama, close attention to even just a single word—ἴτρια—can have the potential to lead to much wider conclusions. From following this meagre trail of cake-crumbs, I argue, we may state with a good degree of confidence that Sophocles’ *Eris* was set at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, and that it was a satyr play.

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⁴⁰ See Wilkins 2000, 21-22, 323-324, esp. 324: “Gods in Old Comedy ... display a remarkable desire to eat almost any human food”; “[in Epicharmus’ *Wedding of Hebe*] the gods are portrayed eating foods, as would mortals at a human wedding feast.” I note, without pressing the connection, that among the many children of Eris at Hes. *Th.* 226-232 is *Λιμός* (‘Hunger’) (227).

⁴¹ In which case, this characterisation may explain the force of αὖ (‘again’) in fr. 199: Eris’ repeated hungry glances at the *itria* could reflect her role as a kind of insatiable monster. I am grateful to Laura Carrara for suggesting this idea. For the ‘ogre’ motif as a common feature of satyr play, see Seidensticker 1979, 240-243 (≈ KPS 26-27); Voelke 2001, 72-73, 301-327; O’Sullivan and Collard 2013, 28-31.

⁴² We do not see this, however, in the few extant named depictions of Eris, where she appears as a young woman with regular features: see LIMC s.v. Eris. In one instance, an Attic band cup of c. 560-550 B.C. (Berlin, Antikensammlung F1775, LIMC Eris 1), she is also portrayed with both wings and winged boots.

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